

Nebuchadnezzar's Madness

Teacher's Notes

King Nebuchadnezzar ruled one of the greatest kingdoms on earth and thought that he was greater than everyone else. He had a vision in which he was a great tree towering over all and touching heaven. The tree was felled and he became like an ox, being restored to himself only when he lifted his eyes to heaven. When we think we are the greatest we become like wild animals. To be truly human we must look to the Lord.

Daniel 4 Lesson Plan		Materials Needed
1. Welcome Activity (2-3 minutes)	Name Parts of Trees p. 1	
2. Focus on the Word (5-7 minutes)	Read Daniel 4 and discuss p. 2	shortened version of text included on p. 3
3. Learn by Doing Choose 1-2 activities (15-20 minutes)	Raise Your Eyes to Heaven pp. 4-5	pens or pencils
	Build a 3D Tree pp. 6-8 Optional: watch video	stiff paper, green paper, scissors, glue sticks, tape, paper to cover table, small pom-poms or red paper, device to watch video
4. Closing (2-3 minutes)	Recitation and Closing p. 9	Take Home Cards p. 10

New Church Concept People & Trees

In the Word a person is compared to a tree. The truths of faith are compared to leaves, and forms of the good of charity to fruit; the seeds from which new trees grow correspond to truths which spring from good, or to faith which springs from charity. See *Arcana Coelestia* 8326

Welcome Activity: Name Tree Parts

Seat all players in a circle with their legs crossed. The teacher leads the group and sets the rhythm in motion. The rhythm is a slap on thighs, hand clap and two finger snaps (first with the right hand and then with the left hand). The four even beats go: slap, clap, snap, snap. When everyone is snap-clap-snapping together the game starts. The category for this game is "tree parts".

Teacher: Slap, clap...on snap, snap: "Names of". Snap clap...on snap, snap: "Tree parts".

Player 1: Slap, clap...on snap, snap: "Branch-es".

Player 2: Slap, clap...on snap, snap: "Flow-ers", etc.

Spread one syllable words (e.g. roots) out over two snaps. Continue until everyone has had a chance to say at least one word.

Today's story introduces a dream about a tree. Trees in the Word are often compared with people. As you listen to the story think about why a tree that represents a person might be cut down.

Focus on the Word

New Church Concept The Stump

The stump of the roots which they should leave [in the ground] means the Word being understood as to the letter only, which is knowledge in the memory. The bands of iron and brass mean that the interior truths and goods are closed up and bound. When separated from interior things outermost things are falsities and evils. And since a person is then almost like a beast in understanding and will, for evils of the affections and falsities of the thoughts are dominant, it is said that his portion shall be with the beast, and that his heart shall be changed from man's, and the heart of a beast shall be given to him. That this change took place because Nebuchadnezzar claimed to himself a right over holy things and over heaven. See *Apocalypse Explained* 650.32

Read: Daniel 4. A shortened version is included on page 3.

- 1. The kingdom of Babylon in the Word stands for a state of great selfishness—e.g. when a person is completely wrapped up in their own interests and concerns. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, dreamed of a tree that looked beautiful and whose top reached heaven. What did the tree represent?** The tree was a picture of the king.
- 2. Just as we might think of ourselves as “great”—Nebuchadnezzar saw himself as both great and beautiful. His kingdom was indeed the greatest on earth. He was proud of it! Why might Nebuchadnezzar have been told to cut the tree down?** Nebuchadnezzar made the mistake of believing that he had created the great kingdom of Babylon by *his own power*.
- 3. It's easy for us to believe we are responsible for our own successes too. If we are to enter heaven we must cut down or remove selfish attitudes like this in ourselves. Our lives must be re-formed with the Word as their basis, not ourselves.**
- 4. Why might the watcher have left a stump?** Making changes in ourselves takes time. The Lord does not destroy our lives, but wants harmful parts of us to be trimmed away gradually so we can re-grow *in His image*.
- 5. Daniel warned Nebuchadnezzar to change his ways or suffer being cut down, like the tree in the dream. Since he did not change his behavior, Nebuchadnezzar became like a wild animal for seven years. What is the difference between a person and an animal?** The New Church teaches that animals are concerned with themselves and cannot have a relationship with the Lord, but that people, while also concerned with themselves, can also raise their minds to the Lord and reflect on what they think and do.
- 6. When might a person be like a wild animal?** When the person thinks and acts selfishly and does not consider others.
- 7. What did king Nebuchadnezzar do to return to his right mind?** He lifted his eyes to heaven. We lift our eyes to heaven when we are mindful of the Lord and others. This may take time—just as it took Nebuchadnezzar seven years.
- 8. The Word often compares people with trees. A person who obeys the Lord's commandments becomes like a fruitful tree that is truly beautiful, and a “home” for good thoughts and loving actions.**

Nebuchadnezzar's Madness

⁴ I, Nebuchadnezzar, was in my palace. ⁵ As I was lying in bed, the visions of my head troubled me. ⁶ So I commanded that the wise men of Babylon be brought to interpret the dream. ⁷ When the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners came, I told them the dream, but they could not interpret it. ⁸ Finally, Daniel (Beltshazzar) came and I told him the dream.

⁹ I said, "Beltshazzar, the Spirit of the Holy God is in you, and no secret troubles you. Explain my dream and its interpretation. ¹⁰ These are my visions: Before me stood a tree. Its height was enormous. ¹¹ The tree grew large and strong and its top touched the heavens; it was visible to the ends of the earth. ¹² Its leaves were beautiful, its fruit abundant, and on it was food for all. Under it animals found shelter, and birds lived in its branches; from it every creature was fed.

¹³ "I saw a watcher coming down from heaven. ¹⁴ He called: 'Cut down the tree and cut off its branches; strip off its leaves and scatter its fruit. Let the animals get out from under it and the birds from its branches. ¹⁵ But let the stump and its roots, bound with iron and bronze, remain. Let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let him live with the animals among the plants. ¹⁶ Let his heart be changed from a man and be the heart of an animal, till seven times pass by. ¹⁷ The decision is the decree of the watchers so that the living may know that the Most High rules over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes and sets over them the lowliest of people.' ¹⁸ "Now, tell me what the dream means, for none of the wise men can interpret it. But you can, because the Spirit of the Holy God is in you."

¹⁹ Daniel (Beltshazzar) answered, ²² "O King, the tree you saw—you are that tree! You have become great and strong; your greatness has grown until it reaches the sky, and your dominion extends to end of the earth.

²³ "The king saw a holy one coming down from heaven and saying, 'Cut down the tree and destroy it....'

²⁴ "This is the interpretation, and the decree the Most High has issued against the king: ²⁵ You will be driven away and live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox and be drenched with the dew of heaven. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High reigns over all kingdoms on earth. ²⁶ The command to leave the stump with its roots means that your kingdom will be restored to you when you acknowledge that Heaven rules. ²⁷ Therefore, O King: Renounce your sins by doing what is right. It may be that then your prosperity will continue."

²⁸ All this happened. ²⁹ Twelve months later, as King Nebuchadnezzar was walking on the roof of the palace he said, ³⁰ "Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?" ³¹ A voice came from heaven saying, "King Nebuchadnezzar: Your kingdom has been taken from you. ³² You will be driven away and will live with the wild animals; you will eat grass like the ox. Seven times will pass by for you until you acknowledge that the Most High rules over all kingdoms on earth."

³³ Immediately King Nebuchadnezzar was driven away and ate grass like the ox. His body was drenched with the dew of heaven until his hair grew like the feathers of an eagle and his nails like the claws of a bird.

³⁴ At the end of that, I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me. ³⁶ At the same time my sanity was restored and I was restored to my throne. ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and exalt and glorify the King of heaven, because all His works are truth and His ways just.

(Daniel 4:1-37 adapted from the NIV)

Raise Your Eyes to Heaven

Materials Needed for Each Student

copy of *Raise Your Eyes* p. 5;
pencil or pen

Prepare in Advance

Print copies and gather pens.

New Church Concept People and Animals

Human beings, regarded in themselves, are no different from animals. The five senses, appetites, natural desires and affections are similar. Their good loves are similar, such as loving companions, offspring, and loving married partners. Human beings are superior to animals in that they have an inner life which does not and cannot exist with animals. That life is the life of faith and love from the Lord. Unless that life were present in the smallest characteristic they would not be different. If the life of love from the Lord were not present in the will, and the life of faith from the Lord in the understanding, a person would not be human. See *Arcana Coelestia* 714

When Daniel interpreted Nebuchadnezzar's dream and urged him to change so the dream would not come true, Nebuchadnezzar ignored the advice. A year later, while saying how great he was, his life changed and he became like an ox for seven years. When he finally raised his eyes to heaven—to the Lord—his reason



returned. The difference between an animal and a person is that a person can think and act in freedom, looking to the Lord and acting from Him. The New Church teaches that people become like wild animals when they are dominated by selfishness, greed, or a desire for power. Engage the students in a discussion that invites them to “raise their eyes” and think of ways to go beyond fight or flight responses to common situations.

1. In what ways are people and animals similar? In what ways are they different?
2. New Church teachings tell us that our ability to raise our minds to the Lord, and to live *from Him*, and not ourselves, is what makes us human.
3. Every day we experience situations in which we choose how to respond to others. We are going to look at some common experiences and think about ways we could deal with them that are natural (animal), and ways we could respond that are spiritual (truly human).
4. Give each student a copy of *Raise Your Eyes* (p. 5) and a pen or pencil.
5. Look at line 1: Someone just pushed in front of me in line. One natural response might be, “They’ve got a nerve! I was here first!” A spiritual response that considers the Lord and others might be, “This isn’t a big deal. Perhaps that person had a good reason to need to get through the line faster. He or she can go first.”
6. Divide students into pairs. Give them 5-10 minutes to complete the table. *Optional:* assign pairs of students several rows each if you are short on time.
7. Gather the class and invite students to share and discuss their responses.

Raise Your Eyes

Scenario	Natural (Animal) Response	Spiritual (Human) Response
Someone pushes in front of you in a line.	How dare they! I was here first.	This isn't really important. Being friendly is more important than being first. And he or she might have a good reason to be in a hurry. He/she can go first.
You make an embarrassing mistake.		
You score a goal!		
Someone took two candies and you didn't get any!		
Someone is trying to open a door with full hands.		
Someone bumps into you.		
A person on your team just did something that made you lose.		
You want to connect with friends but your phone is lost.		
You are afraid of spiders and someone shows you one.		
A parent asks you to help while you're busy.		
You're put in a project group with someone who is lazy.		

Build a 3D Tree

Materials Needed

3 copies of *Tree* p. 7 printed on stiff white paper and a copy of *3D Tree Instructions* p. 8 **for each student**, thin green paper, scissors, tape, glue sticks, small craft pom-poms or red or yellow paper, paper to cover table
optional: device for watching www.newchurchvineyard.org/resource/video-trees-in-the-word-correspondences

Prepare in Advance

Watch the video and decide if you will use it in class. Note: video is 10 minutes. You may also wish to make a sample tree.

New Church Concept People and Trees

Our early childhood is like the sprout of the tree emerging out of the ground from its seed. Our youth and young adulthood are like that sprout growing into a trunk with slender branches. The earthly truths that we first take in are like the leaves. Our first steps into the marriage of what is good and what is true are like the flowers a tree brings forth. The good deeds done from a caring spirit are like the fruit. The propagation of wisdom from love is like the seeds. See *Divine Providence* 332.3

The Word often compares people with trees. The New Church teaches that parts of a tree correspond to parts of the human mind. In this activity, students create a 3 dimensional standing tree and reflect on how their lives can grow with the Lord's love and wisdom.

1. If you have chosen to use the video on the *Correspondences of Trees* run it before beginning the discussion. (Video is ten minutes.)
2. The Word often compares people with trees. Sometimes trees in the Word represent people who lead lives based on the Word, and sometimes they represent people who are selfish.
3. Growing a tree that is rooted in the Word is a life-long process, but we can work on our tree every day.
4. The teachings of the New Church tell us that leaves represent truths from the Lord's Word. In the Holy City, New Jerusalem, that the apostle John wrote about in the book of Revelation, there was a beautiful Tree of Life whose leaves "were for the healing of the nations" (Revelation 22:2). It is truth that can heal us of our tendencies toward selfishness.
5. We are also taught that the fruits on a tree represent the good actions that we do out of love for the Lord and people around us. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus said, "Every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.... Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:17,20).
6. Hand out the *3D Tree Instructions* (p. 8) and read the verses from Psalm 1 together. This passage describes the kind of tree we can be like if we follow the Lord.
7. Have students work either by themselves or in pairs to create a 3D Tree. Students will each need 3 copies of the *Tree* (p. 7) along with the other supplies.
8. These trees can be used as decorations, such as table centerpieces, or put beside a copy of the Word, to remind us of the life we are striving for.





3D Tree Instructions



Blessed are those who walk not in the counsel of the ungodly,
 Nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful;
 But their delight is in the law of the Lord,
 And in His law they meditate day and night.
 They shall be like trees planted by rivers of water,
 That bring forth their fruit in its season,
 Their leaf also shall not wither; and whatever they do shall prosper.

Psalm 1:1-3



1. Fold the rectangular base of each tree page up toward the trunk.



2. Fold each tree page in half with the blank side showing.



3. Rub glue on the top side of one page. Place another folded page on top and press to glue.



4. Glue the last page on top of the other two in the same way.



5. Glue the two remaining single flaps together to form a Y shape.



6. Unfold the pages and cut a slit up the center of each base.



7. Fold all pages together. Start from the base to cut out tree.



8. Finish cutting out the tree. Then unfold the three flaps.



9. Fold the pieces of the bases over each other and tape together as shown.



10. Accordion fold a green piece of paper and cut out leaf shapes as shown above. Do not cut through the folds.



11. Add glue to the base of one side of the leaf.



12. Glue the leaves to the branches. As you work, it may be helpful to stand the tree up and tape the base lightly to the table.



13. Glue on pom-poms as shown in the picture at the top of the page. Or cut fruit shapes out of colored paper to glue on.

Recitation and Closing

The Book of Daniel contains beautiful prayers. We are focusing on one quotation during the close of each lesson. Most of the quotations were spoken by Daniel after he received the power to explain Nebuchadnezzar's dream (Daniel 2). The quotation for lesson three was spoken by Nebuchadnezzar after he recognized the Lord as the true God (Daniel 4).

For this lesson, focus on quotation 4: "He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those who have understanding." Read the verse aloud and invite the students to repeat it with you. What wisdom restored Nebuchadnezzar to himself?

Closing

Daniel is one of the true heroes in the Word. Daniel's name means "God is my judge". King Nebuchadnezzar ruled one of the greatest kingdoms on earth and thought that he was greater than everyone else. Daniel was called to explain his vision, in which he appeared as great tree. The tree was felled and Nebuchadnezzar became like an ox. He only became himself again when he lifted his eyes to heaven.

When we think we are the greatest we look like wild animals in the light of heaven. To be truly human, or heavenly, we must look to the Lord and seek His help to do what's right, recognizing that all power and wisdom come from Him.

Give students a Take Home Card (p. 10) as they leave.



Like a Tree

The Word often compares people with trees. The New Church teaches that parts of a tree represent parts of a person's mind and life. For example, we must be rooted in the Lord's Word. It feeds our minds like the roots of a tree take in water and nutrients from the earth. Leaves mean true ideas from the Word. And fruit stands for the good things we do because we love the Lord and our neighbors and want to serve them.

On the drawing of the tree above, choose one truth from the Word that inspires you and write it between the roots and the leaves. Think of one good action you have done and write it near the fruit. These things help you to grow into a person who is like a tree planted by the water—strong, and beautiful, and useful.

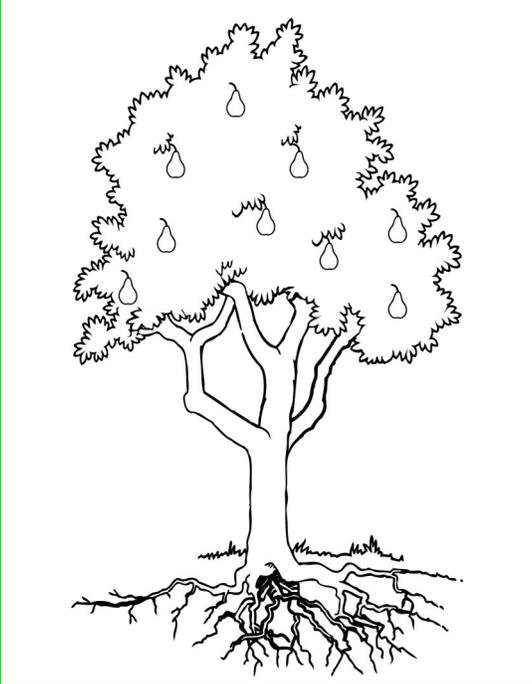
Prayers in Daniel

1. Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, for wisdom and might are His.
2. He reveals deep and secret things. He knows what is in the darkness, and light dwells with Him.
3. How great are His signs and how mighty His wonders! His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. And His dominion is from generation to generation.
4. **He gives wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those who have understanding.**
5. And He changes the times and the seasons. He removes kings and raises up kings.
6. I thank You and praise You, O God of my fathers. For You have given me wisdom and might.

Daniel 2:20-23; 4:3 adapted

Jake Home Cards

Cut the Take Home Cards apart and give one to each student.



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